

Hertfordshire Police Authority and Hertfordshire Constabulary Draft Engagement and Consultation Strategy

Involving all local people in the development of the policing services they need and receive is central to our aim of creating a safer and more secure Hertfordshire.

The Police Authority and the Constabulary will build on the work that is already done to increase the interest and involvement of all our communities in the way police services in the county are provided.

This document sets out our aims for engaging and consulting with the people of Hertfordshire and how we intend to achieve them. It is jointly owned, will be jointly managed and the Police Authority and the Constabulary will be jointly accountable for its delivery.

It acknowledges the drive towards greater partnership working across the county and, in particular, with our Crime and Disorder and Local Strategic partners.

It is a living document and, as such, will be reviewed annually to enable us to respond to changing situations and demands. It will be brought to life through an annual action plan of engagement and consultation activities.

CONTEXT

- The Police Authority has a statutory obligation to consult the public.
 - Section 96 of the Police Act 1996 requires the Authority to make arrangements to obtain the views of local people about matters concerning policing in the area and to obtain their co-operation with the police in preventing crime.
 - The Local Government Act 1999 imposes on the Authority the Best Value duty, which includes the duty to consult.
- The Police Authority and the Constabulary have statutory obligations to consult the public.
 - Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (and subsequent amendment in the Police Reform Act 2002) requires all 'Responsible Authorities' to consult the public as part of a

tri-annual crime audit and production of a Community Safety Strategy. The Authority and the Constabulary, together with the fire authority, local district/borough council and Hertfordshire County Council make up the Responsible Authority groups.

- ❑ The Race Relations Act (amendment) 2000 requires the Authority and the Constabulary to assess and consult on the likely impact of its proposed policies on the promotion of race equality and to ensure public access to information and services.
- On the introduction of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Authority agreed to combine wherever possible its statutory consultation groups, set up under the 1996 Police Act, with the newly formed Community Safety Partnerships.
- Following a Best Value Review, the Authority has re-structured the way it works and set up a Community Engagement Committee, which has the responsibility to review and develop engagement and consultation arrangements. One of the key responsibilities of these new combined groups is to engage with and consult the local people.
- One of the Constabulary's long-term Strategic Aims is to work with the people of Hertfordshire to achieve safety, justice and reassurance for all our communities.
- Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary's thematic inspection report "Open All Hours" identified effective communications consultation and engagement as an important element in managing levels of public expectation on the police service.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

The purpose of this Strategy is to:

Ensure that all communities in Hertfordshire have an equal opportunity to influence the development of their policing services in order to create a safer environment, reassure the public and reduce the fear of crime.

Engagement and consultation with the public plays a vital role in the decision-making processes of the Authority and the Constabulary. It informs the targets, priorities and objectives in the

annual Policing Plan, the Strategy Plan and, with our partner agencies, in the 10 Community Safety Strategies.

It also provides a measure of public satisfaction with local policing and a forum for information exchange.

Our aims are to:

- ***Inform and communicate with the public to raise awareness and understanding of policing issues, gather information and promote participation in crime reduction.***

The police will not always be able to reflect all the needs of all communities in the services it provides. Ensuring that communities are kept informed about local policing services and issues that influence decisions will promote a greater understanding and contribute to the reduction in the fear of crime.

In Hertfordshire, the fear of crime is proven to be higher than the actual risk of crime. Vulnerable and elderly people often have a far higher fear of crime and this will be taken into consideration when delivering this strategy.

Improving communication with communities and, in particular, stakeholders group such as Neighbourhood Watch, will promote a greater participation in crime reduction.

- ***Work with communities to identify their expectations and priorities in the development of policing services.***

Understanding the expectations and priorities of all our communities will enable the Authority and the Constabulary to make informed decisions about the way policing services are provided in the county. In particular, it will help in the development of the Policing Plan, Strategy Plan and local Community Safety Strategies and when setting the annual budget. It is important that feedback is given to the people who have contributed to the process.

- ***Identify with local communities their immediate safety concerns and conflicts and work with other agencies and local communities to ensure an appropriate response and resolution.***

Consultation and engagement activities often give individuals an opportunity to raise immediate specific concerns and policing issues. It is important that the activities are managed so that these concerns and issues can be effectively passed on for police officers to address speedily.

- ***Enable policing performance to be monitored and challenged.***

All communities can provide essential feedback on performance. Informed debate with all communities will enable realistic expectations to be identified, leading to greater satisfaction with local policing services.

WHO DO WE WANT TO ENGAGE WITH?

The police provide services to a diverse range of individuals, groups and communities. Their expectations, needs and priorities for policing services are also diverse and need to be properly understood and monitored.

We will continue to focus our attention on the needs of local communities and residents. However, it is no longer possible to describe a 'community' as people sharing a geographical location. We each belong to a range of other communities, some of which we identify more closely with than our local community, such as for work, leisure, study and religion. Similarly there are members of our public who, although diverse in their demographic profile, share common attitudes and needs of policing. We will work to better understand and respond to these emerging communities of need and common interest in policing.

Historically the formal consultation and engagement mechanisms used by the Authority and Constabulary have focused on stakeholders, such as other authorities and organisations, on people who volunteer to give their views and on people who use our services. A wide range of other engagement and consultation activity is carried out by our staff in the normal course of their work.

We want to make ourselves accessible to all our communities but realise that we need actively to seek ways of engaging with communities that are traditionally excluded from the normal processes, which previously have concentrated on public meetings and surveys. Each year, as part of our action plan, we will identify a list of communities and groups that we will prioritise in our

engagement and consultation work. As part of its Best Value review, the Authority has already identified the need to engage more fully with young people and minority ethnic groups.

HOW WILL WE ENGAGE?

We will continue to engage with our stakeholders through the existing district and borough-based Community Safety Partnerships and Forums. By working with our partners in these forums, we will endeavour to engage with local communities through a range of consultation methods, including surveys, focus groups, panels and targeted public meetings and exhibitions.

In addition, specific engagement and consultation will be organised by the Authority and the Constabulary, focusing on the priority list of communities and groups identified in our annual plan. We will endeavour to work with those communities and groups to develop appropriate engagement and consultation methods.

We will continue to use publications, such as the Herts Beat newspaper, the Policing Plan and the Annual Report to involve and inform people in the key decisions that are made. This will include the annual launch of the Policing Plan, normally held at the end of March.

Using approaches such as the County Citizens' Panel, the Authority and the Constabulary will continue to regularly survey a cross section of the county's population on a range of specific issues. We will also develop new ways of working with our partners to make best use of other district-based panels.

The Constabulary will continue to use its telephone bureau to survey users of its services and, together with the Authority, will look at ways to improve its effectiveness.

There will always be a need to prioritise, plan and co-ordinate our engagement and consultation to make best use of available resources.

HOW WILL WE MEASURE SUCCESS?

If successful this engagement strategy will result in:

- Informed decision making by the Authority and the Constabulary with greater public involvement in the processes

- More visible accountability for the Authority and the Constabulary
- A better informed public, Constabulary and Authority
- Greater public confidence in the police service and a greater willingness for individuals and organisations to actively support the Authority and the Constabulary in reducing crime and nuisance.
- Improved crime reduction and lower crime levels
- Reduced fear of crime in all communities
- Increased public satisfaction with police services
- Reduced duplication in time, effort or resources in carrying out consultation and engagement

The following measures will be used to evaluate each engagement and consultation exercise.

- Did the activity involve those identified in the objectives?
- Were they representative and in the numbers needed to provide statistically sound information?
- Were the methods used right – what did and didn't work well?
- Did those involved understand what was expected of them and how their feedback was going to be used?
- Was the timescale adequate and met?
- Was the activity cost effective and within budget?
- Did feedback from the activity influence a decision or policy that has been made?

SUMMARY

In support of this strategy, an annual action plan will be produced, which will set out our key activities for the coming year. This will take account of specific consultation required to measure targets set in the Policing Plan and Strategic Plan, and any additional joint working commitments that the Constabulary and/or Authority has with its Crime and Disorder partners.

It will also take account of the statutory responsibilities of the Constabulary and the Authority, for example under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, and retain flexibility to enable a response to changing requirements.

23 January 2003